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## A NOTICE OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF VALESCUS DE TARENTA.

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE BOOK AND JOURNAL CLUB OF THE MEDICAL  
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THE invitation to address you this evening was accompanied with the suggestion of a subject which, at first, I was strongly inclined to accept. It was a description of the Incunabula in the library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Proceeding at once to examine these precious volumes more carefully than I had ever done before, I soon became so exclusively interested in one of them—the *Tractatus de Epidemia et Peste* of Valescus de Tarenta—that I decided to confine myself to its study. Somewhat later I enlarged my subject by including the only other known work of the same author, the celebrated *Philonium*. In a certain sense the *Philonium* might be said to be the only work of Valescus, for some of its early editions, among them the one belonging to the College of Physicians, contain the *Tractatus*; but the first edition of the latter was published about twenty years before that of the former, and is one of the first medical books ever printed; in fact, there is a tradition in the college library that this *Tractatus* is actually the first printed medical book, and it was for this reason that my attention was first centered upon it.

Postponing for the present the brief review of these works which I propose to make, I will now narrate the facts in our possession concerning the life of their author. He is variously known by the names of Valastus, Valescus, Valesius, and Balescon, the latter being probably his Portuguese cognomen. The discrepancies in the spelling and pronunciation of his titular name are equally great, for it is called Tarenta, Taranta, Tharanta, and Tharare. It is impossible to conclude from the diverse orthography of this latter word whether it is intended to designate an Italian or a French town, for Taranto (ancient Tarentum) is a town in Italy on the north coast of the bay of the same name, and Taranta a town in

the same country in the province of Chieti, while Tarare is a French town in the department of the Rhone. According to Sprengel, Tarenta is in Portugal, but this statement cannot be verified. Eloy states that Valescus styles himself François de Balescon de Tarare in the preface of the *Philonium*, but this is not true of the edition of that work which I have studied. In it he gives his name as follows: "Nomen autem compositoris est Valescus, gallice Balescon de Tharanta," and humbly declares that he is the disciple of the disciples of medicine—"discipulorum medicinae discipulus." At the end of the prologue he states that the *Philonium* was begun in 1418, after he had been in the practice of medicine thirty-six years, and on the eve of the festival of St. Barnabas the Apostle: "Inceptus est autem liber iste cum auxilio magni et aeterni Dei post practicam usualem annorum 36 per me Valescum, Anno Domini 1418, in vigilia Sancti Barnabae Apostoli." He then mentions a number of contemporaneous historical events which serve to designate the year in question. The schism, he says, had come to an end, and Pope Martin was in the first year of his pontificate: "Remoto schismate et regnante Domino Papa Martino, anno primo sui Pontificatus." He refers to Martin V (Otto Colonna), who was elected at the Council of Constance, and recognized in France in 1417. John, he continues, was King of Portugal, and occupied in waging war against the Saracens: "In Portugalia regnante Rege Joanne conflictum Saracenis continuo inferendo." John, surnamed the Father of his Country, was in effect King of Portugal from 1385 to his death in 1433. Coming nearer home, he informs us that another John was reigning in the country of Foix and Béarn, but that his mother Isabella was the legitimate ruler of those regions: "In comitatu verò Fuxi et Biarnio regnante Domino Joanne, Isabella matre ejusdem Domina et Comitissa principali existente." According to Astruc, the male line of the house of Foix came to an end with Mathieu de Foix, who died in 1391, when Isabella, his only daughter, transferred the proprietary rights of that house to Archambaud de Grailli, her husband. Archambaud dying in 1412, John, his oldest son, succeeded him under the administration of his mother Isabella, who died in 1426.

In France, Valescus informs us, Charles Alberic was reigning, amid continual wars and tribulations, which were spreading throughout the entire kingdom: "In Francia tunc regnabat Carolus Albricus fidelissimus Rex Francae cum guerris et tribulationibus quae fere in toto regno Franciae invalescebant." The King of France of whom Valescus speaks was Charles VI, whose reign was continually disturbed by the war with England and also by civil wars. The epithet "Albricus" applied by Valescus to Charles has puzzled commentators, among them Astruc, who confesses his inability to understand it. If our author had ended his historical remarks at this point no one could have taken exception to them; but, unfortunately, he continues, and makes a most egregious blunder, for he tells us that John was reigning in England, and



VALESCUS DE TARENTA.

at that time was besieging Rouen: "In Anglia regnante Domino Joanne pertunc in Normandia militante et obsessionem super Rothomagum possidente." King John of England had been dead for exactly two centuries (he died in 1216), and Henry V—Shakespeare's "warlike Harry"—was King of England and had conquered at Agincourt, on October 25, 1415, three years before the memorable eve of St. Barnabas on which Valescus began his book. It would almost seem as if the proper name "John" had become hopelessly entangled in the convolutions of Valescus' brain and he were suffering from a species of echolalia. Since he was in the habit of designating a particular day by the name of its patron saint rather than by its place in the Julian calendar, he must surely have learned to associate St. Crispin's day with the memorable victory of Henry V. Be this as it may, it is evident that, as far as the French people were concerned, Henry's prediction that the names of those who fought at Agincourt would be "familiar in their mouths as household words" had not yet been fulfilled.

Thus far very little has been said concerning Valescus himself, and, it must be confessed, because there is very little to say. We have, however, certain facts concerning his nativity, his standing as a physician and his personal appearance. According to Ranchin, who was elected chancellor of the Faculty of Montpellier on the death of André du Laurens in 1612, Valescus was a native of Portugal, and accustomed to spend his annual vacations in that country. I give this statement on the authority of Astruc, who omits to mention in which of Ranchin's writings it is to be found. The name Balescon, *latine* Valescus, is also indicative of Portuguese or Spanish descent. With reference to his professional standing, there are four statements to the effect that he was physician-in-chief to the King of France, Charles VI. The first of these is to be found in a copy of the *Tractatus de Epidemia et Peste*, published before 1475, to which reference will again be made. The second is in Castellanus, who says concerning Valescus: "Tradunt etiam Archiatrum fuisse Regis Gallorum." The third is in Vanderlinden, who thus relates his name and style: "Valescus de Tarenta, Mospeliensis, Protomedicus Regis Franciae Caroli VI, subquo claruit, et Sigismondo Caesare atque Martino V Papa A. C. 1417 \* \* \* vixit circa 1380." The fourth is in an oration entitled "Apollinis Mospeliensis Bibliotheca habita in augustissimo Apollinis fano pro suprema Apollinari Laurea Guillelmi Pellissier Mospeliensis," November, 1765. In this oration Valescus de Tarenta is mentioned as "Caroli VI Archiatrus."

The facts concerning his personal appearance are much more definite, for we have his portrait.\*

In the frontispiece of the fifth volume of the *Ephémérides Médicales de Montpellier* there is a lithographic portrait of Valescus,

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\*For the photograph of Valescus, copied from a lithograph in the fifth volume of the *Ephémérides Médicales de Montpellier*, I am indebted to Mr. Charles Perry Fisher, the well-known librarian of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.



but no indication as to the source from which it was obtained beyond the name of the lithographer. There can, however, be no doubt that the original is in the Salle du Conseil of the medical school in which, according to Eugene Thomas, the portraits of the professors of the ancient university of medicine, as well as those of the modern Faculty, are preserved. The series begins with the year 1239, and in it are contained the portraits of Rabelais and Rondelet, or, as he was called by the author of Pantagruel, the doctor Rondibilis. In his *Apollinare Sacrum*, which is the name of an address containing the history of the University of Montpellier, Ranchin enumerates the professors whose portraits adorn its walls: "*Quorum imagines videtis ad perpetuam memoriam ornamentumque Universitatis,*" and in the list is the name of Valescus de Taranta.

There can therefore be no reasonable doubt concerning the authenticity of the portrait in the *Ephémérides*.

The countenance of genius does not conform to any special type. The poet may, like Goethe, have the "front of Jove himself," or exhibit the stigmata of marked degeneration; but the traces of deep and patient thought are the common property of scholars. These, it seems to me, are plainly discernible in the countenance of Valescus de Tarenta.

The above are the only known facts concerning Valescus. We know neither the date of his birth nor that of his death, but since he had been thirty-six years in practice in 1418, it is in the highest degree improbable that he could have seen any of his writings in print.

#### THE PHILONIUM.

The first edition of the *Philonium*, printed in Lyons by Cleyn, is dated 1478, but Hain regards this as a mistake, for he says in brackets that it is undoubtedly intended for 1488 ("*legend est sine dubio 1488*"). The next edition (Hain, 15,250) was also printed in Lyons in 1490, on May 19, by John Trechsel, a German. Another edition was printed in the same year in Lyons, November 20, 1490, by Mathias Husz. A fourth edition, with an introduction by Johannes de Tornamira, was printed at Lyons in 1500 by Nicholas Wolff. Lists of subsequent editions are to be found in Haller, Astruc, Eloy, and in the fifth volume of the *Ephémérides Médicales de Montpellier*. The later editions of the *Philonium* are much abridged, the last of them, according to Eloy, being published at Leipsic in 1714. The later editions were not only much abridged, but contained numerous additions in the form of the maxims of Paracelsus. Strange to say, I find no mention by any bibliographer of the edition of the *Philonium* which I exhibit this evening and which was presented to the library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia by the late Dr. Samuel Lewis. On this account alone it deserves special mention.

In the description of *Incunabula* it is customary to quote the introduction, if there is one, or, in its absence, the first and last sentences of the work. This is the practice of Hain and of all bibliog-

rappers of the present day. Of the two sentences mentioned, the last is the more important, because it usually contains the date and place of publication and the printer's name. Proceeding in this matter, I quote the introduction:

"Philonium aureum ac perutile opus practicae medicinae operas dantibus quod Philonium appellatur, consumatissimi medici domini Valesci de Tharanta. Novo ac diligenti examine correctum, novisque et pulchris marginalibus annotationibus exornatum. Introductorius etiam libellus ad practicam medicinae partem domini Joannis de Tornamira."

At the end of the book we find the following: "Explicit utile ac preclarum in practica medicinae opus celeberrimi medici Valesci de Tharanta quod Philonium appellatur, noviter diligenti examine revisum multisque erroribus expurgatum per Victorem Trincavellum Venetum artis medicinae doctorem: necnon introductorium medicinae practicae consultissimi medici Joannis de Tornamira. Venetiis per nobilem virum dominum Lucamantonium de Giunta Florentinum Anno Salutis 1523 tertio nonas Februarii diligentissime impressum."

The copy of the Philonium which I am describing resembles the Lyons edition of 1500 (Hain, 15,252), inasmuch as it contains the introduction, which, by the way, is placed at the end of the book, by Johannes de Tornamira, but it differs from it in four other particulars, namely, in the date, the place of publication, the name of the printer, and the name of the editor. I do not regard the date as so fundamental a point of distinction as the others mentioned, although it is difficult to understand how so many mistakes in the dates of publication of fifteenth and sixteenth century books could have been made. As an illustration of such mistakes I may mention the fact that the date of the oldest copy of the Philonium in the library of the surgeon-general's office is printed 1401—an impossible date—which leaves it uncertain whether the real date of publication was 1491 or 1501, for it is doubtless a misprint for one or the other. As a matter of course, the date, even though misprinted, serves to identify a book; but what date are we to agree upon when there are three, as in Dodonaeus, which bears the date of 1521 on the title page, 1584 at the close of the dedication, and 1581 at the close of the preface or "Lectori Salutem?" As regards the other three fundamental particulars above referred to—the name of the printer, Lucas Antonius; the place of publication, Venice, and the name of the editor, Victor Trincavellius—the copy of the Philonium in the possession of the College of Physicians, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is unique. With reference to the editor, I find, on consulting Haller, that Victor Trincavellius was a Venetian and a professor at Padua, whose earliest work (*De vena secunda in pleuritide medica ratio*) was published at Venice in 1539.

It is impossible, within the limits of this paper, to give an elaborate review of the Philonium, although I think it would command the interest of the scholarly physician. The value attached to this

work by our medical forefathers is best attested by the fact that its publication was continued from 1488 to 1714—that is, for more than 200 years.

Concerning the title of the book, the word *Philonium*, I was for a short time unable to understand it. The first hint as to its meaning was obtained from that most interesting of books, the Latin Lexicon, in which it is stated that a physician named Philo was the inventor of an eye-salve, called after him *philonianum antidotum*, and, eventually, *Philonium*. This explanation seemed satisfactory; but, to make it completely so, it was necessary to prove that such a remedy was employed by Valescus. This I was unable to do. No such remedy is to be found in Dioscorides, nor in Cardanus, nor in the tenth book of Haly Abbas, which contains a long list of drugs. After considerable search in old books on *materia medica* I found in Fernellius a recipe for a compound remedy called *Philonium*, from which, in all probability, the work of Valescus derives its name, although it seems a singular idea to call a book by the name of a medicament which possesses the following properties:

“*Philonium* \* \* \* *vehementes et acerbos dolores consopit, colicos, nephriticos, atque pleuriticos, somnum accersit, destillationem sistit, tussimque lenit, sanguinis excreationem cohibet.*”

That an author should call his book by the name of a drug which invites sleep—“*somnum accersit*”—is certainly remarkable, but seems nevertheless to be the case. The formula for *Philonium* is as follows:

℞ Croci, ʒv.  
Pyrethri, euphorbii, spicae nardi,  
Myrrhae, castorii, an, ʒi.  
Piperis albi, hyoscyami, an, ʒxx.  
Opii, ʒx.  
Mellis optimi expumati lib., ii.

Hujus dosis est a, ʒi ad ʒss.

It cannot be objected that this remedy was unknown to Valescus because its formula is taken from a book published in 1581. According to Plantius, a commentator of Fernellius, the above formula was employed by Galen: “*Philonii hanc descriptionem, Galeni auctoritate, et usu comprobatum ceteris, author praetulit.*”

The prologue of the *Philonium* is of great interest, and chiefly for the following reasons: (1) Because of the contemporaneous historical facts of which the author makes mention and which have been already considered. (2) Because of the whimsical reasons there enumerated for dividing the book into seven chapters. These are based upon the mystical properties supposed to be inherent in the numeral 7, or, as Valescus expressed it, “*propter multiplices dignitates hujus numeri septenarii.*” In enumerating them he begins with the most sacred of all the associations of this number: “*Septem verba quae dominus noster Jesus Christus, salvator noster, in cruce pendens, locutus fuit,*” and ends with the seven metals and the seven ages of the world: “*Septem metalla, septem aetates mundi.*” Between the first and last of these *septenarii* there



are twenty others, the most noteworthy being the seven petitions in the Lord's prayer, the seven churches in Asia, the seven ocular tunics, and the seven pairs of nerves. A similar fantastic division was adopted by Gordonius, a predecessor of Valescus in the Faculty of Montpellier—"Il commença d'y enseigner en 1285" (Astruc)—who called his principal book, of which there is a copy in the library of the College of Physicians, the "*Lilium Medicinae*," and divided it into seven parts, because "in lilio enim sunt multi flores et in quolibet flore sunt septem folia candida et septem grana quasi aurea: similiter liber iste continet septem partes," etc. Other works with similar fantastic titles are the *Rosarium Philosophorum* of Arnold of Villanova, the *Flos Florum*, *Lumen Luminum*, etc.

One of the most curious and interesting chapters in the *Philonium* is that which treats of leprosy (liber 7, cap. 39). In its treatment he recommends the internal use of serpents, and in proof of their efficacy quotes the case of a blind man to whom they were administered by his wife with the object of poisoning him, but who, instead of dying, recovered his sight: "Habes exemplum de quodam ceco cui uxor dedit serpentes cum aliis cibis ad comedendum ut eum interficeret, quos appositos, cecus comedit, multo sudore emisso, visum recuperavit." He also advises castration in leprosy—not, as might be supposed, for the benefit of the species, but for its curative effect upon the diseased individual: "Cum testiculi toti corpori calorem influant, corpora autem leprosorum frigida sunt et sicca, dico ut remotio testiculorum in leprosis juvat quod cum in lepra sit nimia siccitas, per remotionem testiculorum corpus humectatur et quasi effeminatur et humiditas retinetur."

According to Sprengel, Valescus reports, in the *Philonium*, a case of hematidrosis. This statement I have not been able to verify, and no such case is reported in the *Exempla Rara* of Dodonaeus, which are confessedly derived in part from the writings of Valescus. It is true that in Dodonaeus there is the record of a case entitled "*Sanguinis ex Poro Fluxus*," and a very interesting case it is, but it is certainly not a case of sudor cruentus, and, besides, it occurred in the practice of Dodonaeus himself. Among the numerous cases of hematidrosis contained in the *Literatura Medica Digesta* of Planquet, none is credited to Valescus.

Our author was evidently a believer in organotherapy, as is proved by his recommendation of the internal use of snakes in leprosy; but he did not limit the employment of organic substances to the domain of internal medicine. In the treatment of suppuration of the ear (liber 11, cap. 53) he advises as a local application the bile of a crow, a vulture, and a tortoise, mixed with human milk: "Valet etiam fel corvi et fel vulturis et fel testudinis mista cum lacte mulieris."

Some of the questions discussed in the *Philonium* are very curious, and with a mere mention of a few of them I will close my imperfect review of this remarkable book. One of them is an inquiry as to what language would be spoken by children brought



up in a solitary place by mutes: "Quod linguagium loquerentur pueri a mutis nutriti in loco solitario?" His answer is, "none," except what they might invent: "Respondeo ut nullum nisi illud quod ipsi inter se conficerent postquam essent sensus et rationis capaces." Another discussion concerns the reason why the cleaners of cesspools are able to tolerate foul odors: "Quomodo mundatores latrinarum possunt sufferre tot fetores."

The last two examples of obscure subjects discussed in the *Philonium* show an acquaintance with fundamental facts in the clinical history of calculous disease and gout. The first of them is an inquiry why calculi are found in the kidneys of old people and in the bladders of the young: "Quare in senibus lapis frequentius generatur in renibus pueris vero in vesica." The second, why gout and sciatica are more common in men than in women: "Cur viri frequentius incurrant sciaticam et guttam quam mulieres?"

With this bare mention of some of the subjects treated of in the *Philonium* I will close my notice—for it is nothing more—of this remarkable book.

#### TRACTATUS DE EPIDEMIA ET PESTE.

As already stated, there is a tradition in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia that this is the first printed medical book. It is impossible either to prove or disprove such a statement, for the work is not only undated, but without the name of the printer or the place of publication. It corresponds to No. 15,244 in Hain's *Repertorium*, and heads the list of editions of the *Tractatus*. There are four editions of this book described by Hain, the first, as just stated, corresponding to the copy in the College of Physicians; the second resembles the first, in that it is without date, place of publication or name of printer; the third edition is dated 1474, and the fourth was printed at Hagenow in 1497 by Henricus Gran. The work was translated into the Catalan language by Johannes Villar, and printed at Barcelona in 1475. I am not thoroughly familiar with the internal evidence which led Hain to regard the undated editions as older than those which are dated. The decision of such a question can only be correctly made by an expert in typography. I have, however, compared this copy of the *Tractatus* with a book to which Copinger assigns the date of 1463, and it corresponds with it most closely. The work in question is the *Speculum de Honestate Vitae*, by S. Bernardus (Hain, 2901), and, according to Hain, was printed by Schoeffer. "This precious work is from the Buxheim Monastery, and is printed with the types of the Latin Bible of 1462."\* It seems highly probable that the *Tractatus* of Valescus was printed not later than 1470, for the third edition of the work is dated 1474. The question whether or not it is the first medical book in type might perhaps be decided by anyone having sufficient patience to read the four volumes of Hain's *Repertorium*, which contains a description of 16,299 Incunabula.

\*From a handbook of Incunabula in the Widener branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

It is with hesitation that I venture to dissent from the statement, or, rather, the suggestion, of Hain that this copy of the *Tractatus* was printed by Martinus (or Simus) Flach. According to both Santander and Burger, Flach printed his first book, the *Speculum Roderici*, in 1475, and, as already stated, the third edition of the *Tractatus* was printed in 1474.

In the books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was not uncommon to include in the same volume the works of different authors. In accordance with this practice we find the *Tractatus* of Valescus in the same volume with the treatises *de Venenis* of Albano and Arnold of Villanova, the book bearing the date of 1487, and the printer being Matthaëus Cerdonis (Hain, 12). The *Tractatus* was also printed with the treatise of Arnold of Villanova, "*de arte cognoscendi Venena*—this work (Hain, 1805) was published before the year 1475—and here, as previously stated, we find Valescus spoken of as *regis Frantiae Protomedicus*. Haller mentions but one edition of the *Tractatus*, which was published at Padua in 1487. This is not contained in Hain's *Repertorium*. Neither Astruc nor Eloy makes mention of any editions of the *Tractatus*, either separate or combined with the *Philonium* or other works, and I may add that neither of these authors is strictly reliable from a bibliographical standpoint, although in all other respects their works are of great historical value.

The *Tractatus* is divided into twelve chapters, of necessity short, since it contains in all but twenty-seven pages. The first chapter, which treats of the etiology of epidemics, is headed: "*Qualiter et a quibus causis et quo tempore causetur epidemia*." Avicenna Hippocrates and Rasis (Rhazes) are quoted to prove that epidemics are more prevalent in summer and early autumn: "*In tempore calido ut in estate vel autumpni principio*." This last sentence deserves particular comment inasmuch as the word "*autumpni*" contains a superfluous letter. This is in marked contrast to the contractions and elisions which are so common in *Incunabula* and so perplexing to the reader who is not somewhat versed in paleography.

One of the recommendations in this chapter is eminently adopted to favor the diffusion of contagious disease. It is that the infected person should frequently change not only his bed, but also his room and his house: "*Bonus esset si egri crebro mutarent non solum lectum immo cameram et domum ut attraherent aerem novum non tantum infectum sicut est illè ubi starent semper*." The influence of the winds in the production of epidemics is considered, and a malign influence attributed to long-continued southerly winds occurring late in autumn. Then the pestilence suddenly arrives: "*Tunc merito venit pestilentia maxime si cum istis fuerit mala vel maligna influenza ut cum Saturnus est in domo sua, scilicet in capricorno et aquario, prout modo est, quia nunc XXV Octobris anni millesimi quatercentissimipmi quando iste tractatus fuit compilatus, Saturnus erat in duodecimo gradu capricorni*." This is the most interesting sentence in the book, since it is the only

one that contains a date. According to it, the book was written in 1401, about seventy years before it appeared in print.

Cap. II. The second chapter, entitled "*De signis prognosticis et ostensivis epidemiae*," enumerates various phenomena supposed to be prognostic of an epidemic. Among them are fiery signs, "*impressiones ignitae*," such as comets and falling stars—*Stellae cadentes*—also the unaccustomed appearance of a multitude of animals, such as toads, frogs and locusts. He then mentions certain states of wind and weather which, prevailing either in spring or summer, herald the appearance of an epidemic either in summer or winter. In the last sentence of this chapter is a proof that the term "epidemia" is not used by Valescus in the modern sense of that word, but has a special significance. The sentence is the following: "Unde cum epidemia aliquando veniunt morbilli, aliquando variolae, aliquando obtalmiae (sic) et alia hujusmodi." From our present standpoint there are no diseases to which the term "epidemic" is more applicable than to measles and variola. Additional proof is found in a succeeding chapter that the term "epidemia" as employed by Valescus signifies the bubonic plague.

Cap. III. *De preservatione ab epidemia per aeris correctionem et per recessum a loco in quo est.* First, he advises flight—"et quanto longius \* \* \* sicut ille non moritur in proelio qui non est in eo." Then follow directions for those who are obliged to face the pestilence: "\* \* \* Domus debet esse munda a quibuscunque superfluitatibus maxime quae generant fetorem longe a funerariis et ab aquis stantibus, et officia latrinarum sint clausa." Early rising in cloudy weather is condemned: "Quando aer est caliginosus seu nebulosus non surgat demane." The resident in a pestilential city is advised to remain in the house: "Non discurrat per villam sed occupetur per domum clausis postis et fenestris cum vitro vel cum panno in cerate ut lux entret et non aer putrefactus." He lays stress upon the prophylactic effect of odorous substances, such as musk and amber: "Ut dicit Avicenna qui docet aerem alterare cum ambra, thure, ligno aloes et similibus." Around the house and inside are to be strewn "rami salicis, thamarisci, quercus, et canarum \* \* \* et rosetur domus cum aqua fontis, aceto, aqua rosata \* \* \* et caveant a usione et conversatione hominum infectorum et tactu et si fiat vertatur facies et odoret acetum."

Cap. IV. *De preservatione ab epidemia per evacuationem.* This chapter opens with directions concerning the methods of expelling superfluous humors—"humiditates superfluas"—which should vary with the age and temperament of the patient and the season of the year. There is no discussion of the reasons for purgation, which is taken for granted, and especially in the case of the plethoric: "Immo etiam confortatur haec mortifera rabies quando invenit corpora repleta." Myrrh, saffron and "aloe cicotrina" are recommended as ingredients of pills. Venesection is advised, particularly in the young and "sanguine:" "\* \* \* vel ad dragmas vel ad uncias, de mediana vel epatica aliquando de splenetica: per



talem enim phlebotomiam cessat ebullitio sanguinis vel colerae in venis vel prohibetur."

Cap. V. *De preservatione ab epidemia cum cibis et potibus.* Foods easy of digestion, "et putrefactioni resistentes," are recommended. It is also advised that the meals be smaller and at shorter intervals than in times when epidemics are not prevalent. Pork and beef are condemned. Birds, except aquatic fowls, are permitted, also rabbit, mutton and hare. A long list of vegetables and fruits, which are either indicated or contraindicated, is appended. It is difficult to understand the advice to refrain from the use of "nectar." "Caveant a nectare propter calefactionem at ebullitionem, et a musto." The term nectar is applied by classical writers to anything sweet or pleasant to the taste or smell, such as honey, wine, milk or the odor of flowers. "Must" is unfermented wine. Bathing is forbidden, but the hands, feet and legs may be washed with water and vinegar. The chapter ends with a quotation from Haly: "Caveat etiam a rebus quae excedunt in dulcedine ut sunt uvae passae, dactili, caricae, zuccara et a confectionibus quae ex iis fiunt nisi sint medicinales."

Cap. VI. *De preservatione ab epidemia per exercitum.* This chapter is the shortest in the book, containing but thirteen lines. It recommends moderate exercise "in loco temperato non in sole calido." The violent exercises which are to be avoided are enumerated: "Caveat a coreis, a luctatione, saltucursus et ab omni actu a quo requiritur hanelitus magnus et frequens."

Cap. VII. *De preservatione ab epidemia per somnum et vigiliam.* Haly is quoted as opposed to sleeping in the daytime: "Somnus diurnus evitetur maxime in hieme et tempore calido dum sunt dies magni." Sleeping after meals is condemned: "Qui post cibum illico dormiuntur illico gravitatem in corpore patiuntur." Loss of sleep is also to be avoided: "Caveat a superfluis vigiliis qui superflue dessicant et virtutem deiciunt."

Cap. VIII. *De preservatione per accidentia animae.* In this chapter a warning against the evil effect of undue emotion is uttered, such as anger, excessive joy, and indulgence in coitus. Concerning the latter he says: "De coitu autem non facimus capitulum singulare sed, meo consilio, dimittendus est maxime superfluous. Nam qui tempore pestilentiali abutitur coitu cito mortali naufragio periclitatur ut vidi frequenter \* \* \* Si tamen consuevit coire et non tenet regimen strictum \* \* \* fiat consilio Galeni per tanta intervalla ut in usibus coitus nec dissolutionem sentiat et levior seipso videatur factus."

Cap. IX. *De remediis preservativis ab epidemia.* This chapter is unusually interesting on account of the numerous remedies recommended as prophylactic in times of epidemic. Many prescriptions are given, and the merits of each of their ingredients discussed. It seems to have been the custom—at any rate it was the custom of Valescus—to give a reason for the insertion of each ingredient in a prescription, and these "reasons" take up consider-

able space. The first of the numerous prophylactics is the following:

℞ Aloes cicotrini partes, ii.

Croci orientalis, mirrae (sic) ana partem, i.

Sumat omni die quasi 5ss vel ʒi.

An elaborate discussion of the properties of each of the ingredients of this prescription ensues, with quotations from "Halienus" (Haly Abbas), Avicenna, and Alcanzi. He advises the drugs to be administered in pill: "Quia sicut mel est ultimum dulcium sic aloes est ultimum amarorum." Summing up his remarks on these drugs, he says: "Ego autem non immerito adhibeo eis fidem magnum quoniam non vidi aliquem periclitari qui eis uteretur in sex vel septem epidemiis quos cum dei auxilio evasi."

In all, thirteen separate prophylactics are enumerated, of which the most important are bolus armenicus, tyriaca, metridatum, and phlebotomy. Great virtue is attributed to tyriaca, and Avicenna is quoted to prove that those who take this remedy not only do not die of the epidemic, but are not attacked by it: "Ideo Avicenna testatur ut ille qui usus fuerit tyriaca ante infectionem non morietur epidemia, immo evadet ab ea."

Cap. X. *Qualiter sit succurrendum cum actu egrotant.* This chapter begins with the following sentence: "Si jam actualiter aliqui egrotant deus subveniat eis cum sua inextinguibili misericordia," which may be freely translated: "If, in spite of the prophylactic measures recommended, any happen to fall sick, may God help them!" He does not, however, advise a purely expectant method of treatment, for he continues: "Et nos faciamus ea quae in ratione stant et ab actoribus precipiuntur." The floors are to be strewn with the twigs and leaves of the plants previously recommended for this purpose, and sprinkled with water and vinegar. The question of giving laxatives is discussed, and the mildest are given the preference: "Aliqui volunt ut detur medicina laxativa quae, si detur, sit multum debilis sicut est cassia fistula, manna, thamarindi, violae, pruna, reubarbarum (sic) et similia." He himself, he says, seldom uses any evacuating remedies except phlebotomy: "Ego autem non multum utor evacuatione nisi flebotomia." The phlebotomy advised is certainly very moderate, even from the standpoint of the present day. Valescus was no Sangrado: "Ista autem flebotomia fiat moderata usque ad quinque vel sex untias, vel magis vel minus secundum ut videbitur operanti quia sanguis reconditur pro thesauro naturae prout dicit Avicenna."

The free use of water is permitted, or, rather, enjoined: "Detur aqua frigida fontina quantum uno haustu possit trahere quia in-frigidat multum."

Among the curious remedies recommended are the following: To a compound electuary composed of numerous vegetable substances he advises the addition of gold filings ("limatura auri") "\* \* \* argenti perlae, safirus, iacintus, smaragdus, os de corde cervi, rasura eboris, coralli albi et rubei \* \* \* et similia cor-

dialia." A prescription which called for gold filings, sapphires, emeralds and coral was certainly not intended for poor patients.

Cap. XI. *Qualiter succurrendum est habita consideratione ad apostema.* This chapter deals with the treatment of the bubo or "apostema," upon the characters of which, according to Valescus, the prognosis depends. These characters are minutely described. A most extraordinary local application is recommended, to wit, the fundament of a live cock, which is to be kept applied until the animal dies. It is to be presumed that the fundament of the animal is to be slit open, although not so stated, for, otherwise, the cause of its death is not apparent: "Secundo gallus vivus osculetur apostema cum culo ejus et culus ejus applicetur apostemati donec moriatur." Live snails are also to be applied, and these are to be followed by leeches and cups. Formulas for embrocations, plasters and other local applications are given, as well as indications for opening the bubo.

Cap. XII. *De dicta in epidemia.* The question of diet is minutely and sensibly treated in the chapter. Suffice it to say that nourishing food, easy of digestion, is advised: "Spiritus autem regenerantur cum bonis cibis facilis digestionis." The author notes the circumstance that patients who force themselves to eat often recover: "Nam multi illorum qui agunt viriliter supra illud, idest supra restaurationem casus appetitus et comedunt violenter, absolvuntur et vivunt."

The treatise closes with the prayer that we may all escape the malign influence of pestilential air: "Ut post longa tempora, bona fine, vitam terminemus."

*Tyriaca.* Among the numerous remedies prescribed by Valescus there is one deserving of special mention. I refer to tyriaca, upon which Arnold of Villanova wrote a monograph. It is also known as theriaca or theriacum, and is perhaps the most complex even of the remedies in ancient pharmacopeias. Theriaca Andromachi, or Venice treacle, is a "compound of sixty to seventy or more drugs, prepared, pulverized and reduced by the agency of honey to an electuary." It was supposed to be an antidote to the bites of serpents and other wild animals, and, eventually, to poisons in general. The word is used by Pliny, and its etymology is indicative of its putative properties. An elaborate recipe for the preparation of tyriaca is contained in the work of Haly Abbas, of which the College of Physicians possesses a copy.\*

It is worthy of note that the use of tyriaca was at one time prohibited in Venice for the reason that its preparation was believed to be impossible. The remedy called mitridatum was also prohibited in that city for the same reason.†

\*From the library of the late Prof. John Ashhurst.

†. . . . Quis sanam Theriacam aut integrum Mitridatum demonstrabit? Unde sapientissimus Venetorum Magistratus toties ejus compositionem fieri vetuit cum perfici posse non existimaret. Cum in clarissima urbium haec not potuerint fieri, in nostris tamen non solum civitatibus sed oppidis distribuuntur, medicique, quod admiratione magis dignum est, utuntur.—Cardanus, de Methodo Medendi, 1565, pp. 21, 22.



The marks of the bookworm are visible in the Tractatus, but not in the Philonium. According to Blades, the ravages of this animal have been greatly restricted during the last century, a fact which he attributed to the diminished production of *edible* books. Its devastations are illustrated by a plate in the work entitled "Enemies of Books," by the author just quoted, which represents two leaves of a Caxton almost completely destroyed by the worm. It is not to be wondered at that it has been anathematized by scholars, whose mildest epithets have been "*bestia audax*" and "*pestis chartarum*." Blades ends his chapter on the bookworm with the following reference to a statement in Ringwalt's "Encyclopedia of Printing" (1881): "There is now, he says, evidently regarding it as a great curiosity, 'in a private library in Philadelphia a book perforated by this insect.'" "O lucky Philadelphians!" exclaims Blades, "who can boast of possessing the oldest library in the States, but must ask leave of a private collector if they wish to see the one worm-hole in the city." This reproach is no longer merited. In the magnificent collection of Incunabula (comprising 501 titles) presented by Mr. Widener to the Free Library of Philadelphia the bibliophile will find frequent opportunities to vex his righteous soul over the irreparable damage inflicted by this *pestis chartarum*.

As we advance in life and, as it pleases us to believe, in wisdom we live more and more in the memory of past events, the outlines of which are gilded by the declining sun. We insensibly become *laudatores temporis acti*, and are partial judges of events in which we ourselves have taken part. There can be, however, no illusion concerning the work done by our medical forefathers—

"The dead but sceptered monarchs, who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns."

If I have succeeded in inspiring you with additional interest in the work of the fathers, and especially in that of the pious old Portuguese, Valescus de Tarenta, my task will not have been in vain.

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